

# Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

DATE: February 27, 1956

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CIA/FDD - [REDACTED]

Use of McCune-Reischauer System of Romanization for [REDACTED] Language

1. The following paragraph was excerpted from official, informal political notes written by Korean Desk Officers in FE/NA during the week ending January 14 to the [REDACTED] concerning the problem of standardized romanization of Korean names and words. As I indicated to you by phone on February 24, I am in complete agreement with the position taken in this paragraph.

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"We agree with your indication in the notes of November 10 that you intend to recognize the rules of euphony in romanizing Korean names. Otherwise we would have little way of knowing that Chong Kuk-mo actually should be pronounced Chong Kung-mo, and after all the southwestern provinces are romanized as Cholla rather than Chon-la. BI probably won't be entirely happy about it, since their files are set up in a modification of the McCune-Reischauer system not allowing for the rules of euphony, but their Korean specialist conceded it will in fact give him little difficulty and says he is happy that the Embassy is using the McCune-Reischauer System. With regard to your comment, however, that you have given up on trying to keep up with the Koreans' own spelling except for invitation lists, we would urge that for the higher officials at least you continue to give their own spellings on your biographic lists wherever you have knowledge of them. NA and BI often have to carry on operations very similar to the Embassy's invitation list activity, and do need to know the spellings used by the higher officials. We certainly do not urge any great effort by the Embassy on this problem, and we fully appreciate the inconsistency of Korean spellings of their own names. We noted recently, for example, that the Admiral seems now to be using the spelling Sohn Won Yil."

2. NA [REDACTED] advised me today that they are forwarding a copy of the Korean Telegraphic Code Book to Seoul, with the comment that the euphonic changes at issue are not reflected in the standard romanizations contained in that useful manual. Incidentally, NA agrees with me that there is some utility in keeping the hyphen between the last two syllables of Korean names and also urges that a simplified explanation of the McCune-Reischauer system be widely disseminated in the course of the general effort to perfect the standardization of romanization.

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